

Impact of Identity Politics on Education in Pakistan: A comparison between Balochistan and Punjab.

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Keywords

ethnic conflict, access to education, insecurity, nationalism, exclusion, instability

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Introduction

*"Minorities, to whichever community they may belong,
will be safeguarded. Their religion or faith or belief will
be secure. They will have their
protection with regard to their religion, faith, their life,
their culture. They will be, in all respects, the citizens
of Pakistan without any distinction of caste or creed."
—Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Founder of Pakistan (1876-1948).*

A crucial determinant of social development is access to quality education. Education is integral for progress and prosperity in economic, social and political realms of an individual's journey. The constitution of Pakistan guarantees the right to education for all children aged 5-

16 years and this right is reinforced by laws and programmes at both provincial and federal levels. Pakistan has a population of 191 million people, of which approximately 52 million are between the ages of 5 and 16. Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates across countries with regards to comparative resources and economic/social circumstances (Memon, 2007). While statistics are difficult to come by, the number of children in this demographic group not attending school is close to 25 million; most of whom are girls (Zaidi 2014). According to UNICEF, the reasons for these high rates are due to deep rooted structural inequalities linked to gender biases and income poverty as well as “problems with the processes of devolution and decentralisation...and inadequate budget allocation and resource distribution” (UNICEF 2013).

Inadequate financial investment, inefficient implementation of programmes and low quality of management, monitoring, and teaching are key issues of concern among many which impact Pakistan's education sector. Additionally, while many developed nations around the world have a single education system in place that creates and ensures unison in thought and perception within a society, Pakistan has three dominant educational systems: state education, elite private institutions and madrassahs (religious schools). Each province in Pakistan accommodates a varied number of different education systems dominated by divergent ideologies. This creates mixed notions of "citizenship" and identity among students and consequently reinforces notions of identity (Nisar, 2010). While there has been some attention focused on the identity politics in Pakistan, there has not been much focus in the literature on the role identity politics as a root cause of inequalities in education in Pakistan.

Prior to Pakistan's independence in 1947, South Asian society comprised of distinct historical and structural features, which emphasised the significance of caste and race (Ahmed, 1989). Pakistan as a nation accommodates six prominent ethnic groups who during their histories have experienced extensive periods of conflict. Punjab constitutes 44.68% of Pakistan's population (CIA, 2013), and has the largest access to scarce resources in absolute figures. In addition, top ranking government officials and a majority of military officers are inherently Punjabi. Therefore, Punjab de facto dominates Pakistan's power structure. Moreover, in comparison to wider Pakistan, Punjab is evidently distinct since it has been recently experienced economic prosperity and socially stability in comparison to other provinces. This as a result has promoted "Punjabi Nationalism" and centralized political power and resources of the country.

Subsequently, smaller provinces, like Balochistan, which constitutes 3.57% (CIA, 2013) of Pakistan's population, and is the largest territorial province, have felt a sense of comparative deprivation. Some have commented in the past that, Balochis are suffering from Punjabi exploitation (Ahmed, 1989). They have developed an attitude that desperately aims to claim for respect, and protection of rights of their ethnic group within the state (Hurst, 1996 and Majeed, 2013). Feelings of resentment experienced towards Punjabis have a danger of initiating secessionism, which, in an extreme case, could lead to an irredentist movement.

The aim of this paper is to explore the impact of ethnic-identity based politics on education in Pakistan. A comparison of Balochistan and Punjab is used to illustrate the apparent disparity in education service delivery evident due to identity politics. To achieve this aim this paper will, first, critically examine theoretical notions of identity politics and ethnicity. Next, several manifestations of Balochis' marginalisation by the Punjabi-dominated federal government in Pakistan will be explored. Multiple perspectives of the impact of ethnic identity based politics on education will be examined based on the experiences of young professionals from Balochistan and Punjab. Finally, the discussion will focus on comparing the experience of education systems between Balochistan and Punjab to establish the self-reinforcing cycle of identity politics in Pakistan.

Literature review

Understanding identity politics

Identity politics is a multifaceted concept that has informed a wide range of studies in public policy and law (Parker, 2005). It has been used to examine violent ethnic and nationalist conflicts experienced in post-colonial Asia and Africa, and informed studies on civil, women's, and lesbian and gay rights movements globally. Individual identity is heavily reliant on the constant reconstructive activities human beings engage in, and is subject to change through the course of their lives (Giddens, 1991). Identity politics is a complex notion that encompasses

several ideological frameworks and political trends. Declining Universalist philosophies, a collapse of conservative class systems and deteriorating conceptual solidarities are fundamental foundations which have led to the evolution of identity politics. Identity politics as a concept emerged during the second half of the twentieth century (Hayes, 2012) when Anspach in 1979 first employed "identity politics" as a concept to outline the activism portrayed by disabled people aiming to modify perceptions among self and society (Bernstien, 2005). This specific approach to politics seeks progression of the interests of particular groups who experience actual or perceived injustice, and are marginalised as a consequence of being a member of a certain race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion and gender. Simply put, identity politics focuses on awareness among certain groups of their collective identity and shared experiences (Heywood, 2009). While scholars agree on the significance and key features of identity politics, the challenges encountered when defining "identity", theoretical conceptualisations of identity politics, causes of identity based political actions, and, lastly, whether identity politics essentially matters in a society, are widely contentious.

Certain scholars defined identity politics as the "politics of differences" (Brunt, 1989 and Sanchez, 2006). It is essential to appreciate the distinction among groups in examining social and political relations. The reality of one group significantly differs from another (Young, 1990). The underlying forces for political action constitute material and non-material features. On the one hand, conventional Western scholars are inclined to highlight structural (i.e. material) aspects of a nation to justify ethnic identification and conflict which chiefly includes: rule of law, economic conditions, self-interest of leaders, political incentives and geography (Hochschild, 2005). For instance, under Zia's Martial law rule in Pakistan, religiously defined militias were created because of the political interest of his reign (Shaheed, 2010). On the other hand, others often utilise non-western (i.e. non-material) characteristics as a focal point to emphasise evident structural conditions (Hochschild, 2005). For example, Pakistan justified its struggle for independence in 1947 using its Islamic identity as a unifying mechanism against India. One must also acknowledge that Pakistanis are divided among ethnic, linguistic and sectarian identities that can pose obstacles to efficient political processes, and reinforce points of conflict in Pakistan (Shaheed, 2010). Therefore, these examples illustrate that structural characteristics of a nation strengthen ethnic identification, and vice versa. This is a vicious cycle and can create further divisions.

The ethno-political climate in Pakistan

Understanding identity politics initiated by ethnic heterogeneity is integral to understanding Pakistani society. Unequal economic, political and social advancement of provinces cause concern for Pakistan as a whole. The severity of circumstances is compounded when groups strictly confine to their own ethnic ideology, whilst striving for an equal voice. Ethnic groups in Pakistan are divided based on two principal attributes: lingual and territorial association (Javaid and Hashmi, 2012).

Language can influence unity, or division as observed in the case of Pakistan (Majeed, 2010). Language in Pakistan has previously been used as an instrument for asserting power, and was evident when Bangladesh declared independence in 1971. Over thirty-two different languages and dialects are spoken in Pakistan beyond the national language Urdu, which all citizens do not speak (Hurst, 1996). Urdu is not necessarily employed as the principal language for instruction in institutions across the different provinces. Balochis communicate among themselves in Balochi, Bravi and Pashto that are distinct from the Punjabi and Siraiki languages spoken in Punjab.

Additionally, territorial affiliations play an essential role in modern day Pakistan. Pakistan is a federation of four provinces divided among ethnic lines and therefore, each province has an exclusive identity. In essence, resources are allocated on the basis of the percentage of Pakistan's total population a province accommodates (Majeed, 2010). Punjab is entitled to the largest share of scarce resources (51.74%) in absolute figures. Smaller provinces feel a sense of deprivation, when Punjab receives more wealth than Balochistan (9.09%), for example (Khan, 2013). As a result, Punjabis possess the majority of seats in the National Assembly (NA) and, naturally advocating to further their own interests, inevitably disadvantage smaller provinces (Adeney, 2012).

Balochistan was designated independent provincial status in 1970, twenty-three years after Pakistan's independence. While Balochistan is Pakistan's largest territorial province, it has the smallest proportion of the national population. The province has valuable energy resources, as

has been successful in attracting a variety of regional financial interests. However, Balochistan's geographical location makes it inaccessible and materially deprived. Furthermore, Balochis are directed by tribal allegiances and roots that impact their national aspirations.

On the other hand, the economic, social, and political dominance of Punjab emerged post-Bangladesh independence in 1971. The largest percentage of Pakistan's population resides on the prosperous agricultural land of Punjab. They maintain the balance of power in their favour as the most influential ethnicity in Pakistan's government through control of key bureaucratic and civil positions in the state. As a result, there is a widely shared perception across other provinces that Punjab manipulates a larger share of resources to serve their own interests (Hurst, 1996 and Khan, 2006).

Education in Pakistan

Education plays an integral role in contributing towards sustainable economic, political and social development of a nation. Pakistan has a legacy of failed educational reforms, and development plans. Pakistan has neglected to overcome this legacy, and the neglect of the nation's education system is a large obstacle to securing the development of the country's future. Illiteracy and lack of educational opportunities for large segments of the population is a challenge for the wider economic development and productivity of Pakistan (Aziz et al., 2014). Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in South Asia (Memon, 2007), and the third largest population, 49.5 million, of illiterate adults globally (UNESCO, 2012). The disparities in literacy among the provinces in Pakistan further illustrate the gaps in national education system. According to the National Economic Survey 2012-13, Punjab has the highest percentage of literate males and females whilst in comparison Balochistan has the lowest rate (Husnain, 2012).

In Pakistan, the budget for 2013-14 allocated for education affairs and services was Rs. 59,277 million (approximately USD 567 Million), an increase of Rs. 11, 403 million (approximately USD 109 Million) from 2012-13. Pakistan's government expenditure on education ranks 146th in the world at only 2.4% of the annual GDP is allocated to education (UN Data, 2012). Beyond inadequate financial investment, Pakistan's education system is plagued by a variety of

complex problems triggered through inefficient implementation of programmes and low quality of management, monitoring, supervision, and teaching (Memon, 2007). These issues have a persistent impact on the quality of education across gender, urban and rural localities and the four provinces (Aziz et al., 2014).

In 2010 the 18th Constitutional Amendment introduced major amendments to the federal government system. A key reform introduced relates to the devolution of powers to provinces and therefore, increased autonomy for education service delivery (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2010). Provinces, on paper at least, were granted an authority to transform education policy, planning, curriculum, syllabus, and standards of education, centres of excellence, Islamic education and Pakistani study centres (Abbasi, 2013). Another significant change was the insertion of Article 25-A in Pakistan's Constitution that guarantees the right to compulsory and free education for all children between the ages of 5-16 with the joint responsibility of the province and state (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2011).

In practice, the 18th Constitutional Amendment has not achieved much to address the challenges within Pakistan's education sector. The Punjabi-dominated national government remains in control of the budget distribution and of the development of general education policies reaffirming the Punjabi authority on Pakistan's economic and political structures. Adequate funds are not released from the central government to enable provision of free education in smaller provinces, which results in inequality of the educational experience (Abbasi, 2013). Moreover, an issue of concern in respect to the 18th Amendment is the limited clarity on the delegation of administrative and financial authority (Bukhari and Kamran, 2013). In effect, this impedes the effective provincial authority in education reforms decision-making, further reinforcing the system of marginalisation among smaller provinces like Balochis, whilst maintaining Punjabis control.

Pakistan's education system is made of three distinct types of educational institutions: public schools, private elite institutions and madrassahs (religious schools). The curriculum of each type of institution reflects, instils and reinforces alternate identities and notions of Pakistani citizenship which can contribute to ethnic strife. The curriculum in public education structures reinforces a hegemonic ideology persistently reflective of the ideologies and perceptions of the

central government. For instance, in President Bhutto's reign the curriculum was revised to address socialist fundamentals (Nisar, 2010).

Private educational institutions have emerged to fill the gap for quality education access and can be attributed to the failed policies, for those that can afford it. In terms of allocation, 72% of the education systems in Pakistan are maintained by the public sector, while 28% constitute private institutions compose (Malik, 2011). They are pre-dominantly *elitist*. Private institutions in Pakistan are perceived to represent an opportunity to serve the demands of the rich, and are determined to pursue "better" quality education through Western oriented curriculums (Nisar, 2010).

On the other extreme of the spectrum there is the non-state run madrassahs (Malik, 2011) operating as Islamic learning centres. Their curriculum is taught in Urdu, Arabic or Farsi, they are a continuation of similar rudiments since medieval times, and are keen to shelter students from what "modernity" promotes. Madrassah's tend to attract students from poorer groups as they provide a means to access free private education (Nisar, 2010 and Zaidi, 2013).

Education in Punjab and Balochistan

Punjab is acknowledged as the education hub of Pakistan, despite several shortcomings inherent when compared to International education systems. Punjab consists of a large student body pursuing education in both public and private institutions with student participation in private education representing a growing trend (Malik, 2011). Private education establishments in Pakistan promote a different ideology, when contrasted with public schooling and madrassahs. They follow a different curriculum and modern teaching strategies and methodologies. Westernised curriculums fundamentally focus on creating virtues of a secular nation-state. They also ensure that students do not merely engage in rote learning, which is an evident drawback of national Pakistani education provided in public schooling and madrassahs. Alternatively, they strive to enhance critical reasoning abilities and soft transferable skills which translate into more opportunities to access the labour market. Students who complete their studies in private education institutions from Punjab therefore may have a liberal outlook towards life and are fluent in the English language. They are able to be highly competitive for

the top jobs nationally or be better positioned to seek out international opportunities (Nisar, 2010).

On the other hand, statistics indicate that most students in Balochistan are enrolled in public-owned schools and universities (Malik, 2011). The establishment of private education institutions in Balochistan face several challenges including poor infrastructure and high cost of service delivery, and extremely slim profit margins (Khan, 2011). An estimated 480 private education establishments can be found in urban centres of Balochistan, whilst comparatively Punjab accommodates has 21,698 (Malik, 2011).

Additionally, a recent trend in target killing of qualified Punjabi teachers and professors in Balochistan has emerged. Supporters justify their actions as a response to the injustice imposed upon Balochistan by the Punjabi government (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Consequently, quality of education suffers. Madrassahs comprise a large proportion of students in Balochistan (Malik, 2011). Elements of western curriculum are strongly resisted since they are deemed to contradict religious beliefs (Nisar, 2010). Therefore, graduates who possess limited critical skills coupled with an inability to speak, read or write in English are unable to compete for quality jobs in the national work environment. Hence, there is a growing perception of discrimination based on ethnicity, reinforcing identity politics.

Furthermore, Balochistan has been experiencing ongoing political instability which ranges from non-violent protests to violent insurgencies for autonomy. A tumultuous relationship between Pakistan's Punjabi-dominated central government and the Balochi province considerably hampers development of a strong education system in Balochistan. At the heart of Balochi contention with Punjab is an unequal distribution of financial resources which impacts access to and quality of a fundamental right to education. Centralised education policies alongside incompetent provincial leadership exacerbate identity-based politics in Balochistan (Bhatti, 2014). This promotes hostility against the existing government system (Majeed, 2013). Unfortunately, a case as such demonstrates a vicious cycle whereby identity politics impacts education service delivery which in-turn reinforces ethnic identity.

Several demands for change from Balochistan concerning the division of resources exist (Mushtaq, 2009). In 2013-14, Balochistan allocated 21% of their provincial budget to enhance education. 30% of funds assigned for education were merely used for improving access to education institutions (Abbasi, 2013 and Alif Alaan, 2013). Balochi leaders express their discontent arguing that nowhere in the world a federal government system devotes financial resources solely on a population basis. Balochistan uses the size of their provincial area as a focal point to demand their need for additional financial resources. This is important for infrastructural development to ensure accessible education for the sparsely dispersed population (Bhatti, 2014).

While Balochi grievances revolve around a denial from their principal rights, Punjab is entitled to the largest share of monetary resources (Khan, 2013). The provincial government has been allocated Rs. 96.9 billion (approximately USD 927 million) in 2014 for advancing their current core strength; infrastructure (Manan, 2013). During the same period of time, student participation in education has been anticipated to increase at unprecedented levels in rural and urban Punjab due to improved access (Afzal, 2013).

Building upon this literature, this study seeks to explore potential effects of identity politics on education in Pakistan where a strong provincial identity often trumps Pakistani nationalism, which has fuelled ethnically motivated political conflicts (Hurst, 1996). Consequently, there is a divergence in access and opportunity to pursue quality education between provinces. Balochistan and Punjab were selected in particular to contrast between extremes. A qualitative research design based upon in-depth interviews was employed to understand and compare the impacts of identity politics imposed on education in Balochistan and Punjab.

Methodology

A qualitative research design employing in-depth interviews with highly educated young professionals from Balochistan and Punjab was used to address the aims of this study. Twelve participants were selected to participate in this study through a non-probability sampling purposive sampling procedure (Bryman, 2012). The selection of participants was based upon carefully considered criteria based on age, education experience, occupation and provincial

based ethnicity. The sample criterion was established to gather a variety of perceptions towards contemporary education in Pakistan. The sample is made up of young professionals from Balochistan and Punjab who have all progressed through the educational system and completed an undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree. Respondents acquired education up to secondary schooling from their respective provinces.

The selection of young educated professionals provided an opportunity to examine in-depth experiences of ethnic-identity and education experiences in Pakistan. Additionally, all respondents pursued education in private institutions and have some limitations in effectively representing an accurate account of students who have acquired public or madrassah schooling. This combined with the small sample size and qualitative research design means that while the study uncovers insights into the relationship between identity politics and education, the results should not be generalized beyond the scope of the lived experiences of participants. Moreover, all Balochi participants completed university in Punjab. While this is strongly suggestive of the adverse impact identity politics imposes on education opportunities in Balochistan, the study should also be treated cautiously, as the respondents of the study represent individuals who have been able to seize educational opportunities that many other Pakistanis are unable to. Thus, the sample is inherently comprised of *educational elites* from both provinces. Table 1. summarizes the profiles of the participants. This table will aid the discussion of findings, and can be used as a point of reference.

Table 1. Participant Profile.

Participant	Age Band	Gender	Occupation	Education Qualification	Province
Ibrahim	20-30	Male	Government Employee	MBA	Punjab
Hamza	20-30	Male	Unemployed	BA	Balochistan
Syed	20-30	Male	Private Sector (Finance)	MBA	Balochistan
Aliyah	20-30	Female	Private Sector (Marketing)	MA	Punjab
Fizza	20-30	Female	Private Sector (Administration)	BA	Balochistan
Marium	20-30	Female	Unemployed	BSC	Balochistan
Rehan	20-30	Male	Private Sector (Education)	PhD	Punjab
Hamid	20-30	Male	Private Sector	MSC	Balochistan

			(Engineering)		
Sarah	20-30	Female	Private Sector (Education)	MBA	Punjab
Amir	20-30	Male	Private Sector (Education)	PhD	Balochistan
Daniyal	20-30	Male	Government Employee	BA	Punjab
Neelofur	20-30	Female	Government Employee	MSC	Punjab

Semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted in in Lahore (Punjab), Pakistan. An interview guide of open-ended questions was developed based upon on a review of secondary materials including peer-reviewed academic articles, official publications from international organizations and the Pakistan government.

The interviews employed open-ended questions as a guide, but the interview process of maintained flexibility to allow unique insights and experiences to emerge from each of the interviews. All of the interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour and a half. Each interview, with permission of the participants were recorded digitally, and then transcribed. The interview transcripts were the analysed using a multi-stage coding procedure (Gibbs, 2007). First, a set of a prior themes were established by the researchers based upon the primary literature. Second, one of the researches conducted an initial open coding of the transcripts with a focus on additional emergent themes. Upon completion of this round of coding, the researchers agreed upon ten focused codes that included represented the pre-set themes and the emergent insights. Throughout the initial coding memos were kept to track the codes and upon completion a code frequency table was developed to aid in the evaluation of recurring codes in the transcript and constant comparison between the transcripts of interviews with respondents from each of province. A second round of coding utilizing these ten focused codes was then completed. Upon completion of the two rounds of initial and focused coding, the researchers reviewed the codes and memos independently. Finally, the researchers agreed upon four overall themes. These themes are used to organize the findings.

Impact of identity politics on education: The self-reinforcing cycle

The comparative analysis between the experiences of the participants from Balochistan and Punjab demonstrates the prevailing social inequality experienced by Balochis. Limited access

and opportunities to pursue quality education emerged as a key area severely affected through identity politics, suggesting that the impact of identity politics in Pakistan is one of the root causes for under-development of education in Balochistan. Overall the findings suggest that identity politics adversely influences the service delivery of quality education in Balochistan, which in effect strengthens existing ethnic disparities suggesting a self-reinforcing vicious cycle.

Previous research suggests that identity has an effective role to play in Pakistan's political economy, and is an integral aspect in social discourses (Wan and Vanderwerf, 2009). An example provided by one of the respondents from Punjab, Daniyal, elucidated this relationship,

Punjab has an upper hand in the administrative spheres of the government. A Punjabi businessman may be given priority by the government, which could help his financial interests and be in line with the financial policies of the financial interests of Punjabis. There is definitely a correlation.

The different educational systems in Pakistan propagate social ethnic conflict in Pakistan. Simply put, the quality of education and opportunity to attend a particular type of institution in Pakistan plays a significant role in strengthening ethnic identity and power relations, which nourishes identity-based politics, since it determines one's course of life. Amir, a Balochi social researcher proclaimed,

Regardless of everything, Punjab is at fault. They have instilled conflict by depriving us of something as basic as education. The quota for army and civil services is filled by those who have an education which is theirs. This is stripping us off our right. Why should we not react? It is very natural to want to hurt the Punjabi-dominated federal government.

The following discussion of the findings that emerged from the analysis of the interviews with young professionals contextualises the role of identity politics in the case of education service delivery in Balochistan and Punjab.

Unequal allocation of financial resources

One of the underlying causes for ethnic conflict in Balochistan can be attributed to the historic unequal allocation of financial resources since the inception of Pakistani state (Majeed, 2013). The Balochis live in a vast province the size of France with enormous reserves of gas, gold and copper. However, federal exploitation of natural resources in the province, combined with repressive state-run policies has contributed to several uprising in the province since independence (Zurutuza 2015). The main point of contention that emerged from the interviews with participants from Balochi was their grievances with the federal government exploitation of their rich mineral reserves, which have generated significant revenues for Pakistan. Fizza, who works in the private sector and is from Balochistan, exclaimed:

The Punjabi-dictated government sells us our own mineral resources back at an extreme price. Fairness does not exist. They show us extraction budgets which are high, but fake obviously. There is no provincial involvement because resources are essentially a federal property. We are in such a bad place.

The population of Balochistan is made up of numerous nomadic tribes, and the population across the population is sparsely scattered across acres of uncultivated land (Hashmi, 2013). The demographic and geographic nature of the province, with a small population and nomadic way of life, has resulted in both a relatively smaller allocation of funds for education development in the region and a challenging situation for efficient investment of these funds. All participants highlighted poor infrastructural development necessary for supporting education services as a contributing factor towards inequality in Balochistan. This is a clear consequence of insufficient funds allocated by the federal government supporting Bhatti's (2014) research. One can argue that this constitutes explicit discrimination that fuels inequality and hence, identity politics. An underlying reason for financial discrimination is identity politics that was clearly stated by Amir,

We have the resources to expand our military. I do believe Pakistan's government has enough funds to build a road and erect a school in

Balochistan, possibly. That costs way less. It is the politics of Punjabi power and corruption.

However as demonstrated by Rehan, Punjabis justify its practicality;

If you need to provide two people electricity in Balochistan, you need five hundred miles of cable to serve just those fifty people. That is not feasible because the same amount of money which could be spent on infrastructure could be used for serving a much larger population elsewhere. Connecting the scarcely populated province is tough.

In contrast, Punjab undoubtedly has access to the largest pool of resources. Most Punjabis believed that receiving maximum funds for education was their fundamental right. The development of infrastructure is tremendous, and is exemplary for other provinces. Education funding in Punjab aims to improve access to education establishments (Habib, 2013). In consequence, an emergence in low-cost private institutions is apparent as Daniyal confirmed,

I lived close to the motorway in Lahore, which is in the suburbs. Now the suburbs have moved fifteen kilometres away. My area is filled with universities. Private institutions, mainly. We have several opportunities to educate ourselves.

Political instability, turmoil and ethnic conflict

In this context, in recent years, separatist movements in Balochistan have emerged, employing violence as a means to retaliate against the central government (Hashim, 2013). According to The Institute for Peace Studies (2010), Balochistan was the least safe province in Pakistan. This increase of violence has been, in some cases, targeted towards educators and educational institutions (Human rights Watch, 2010). One respondent, Ibrahim, was touched by this violence personally and shared a tragic experience, "*he (his brother) wanted to foster change. He was stationed in Balochistan teaching at a public university. My brother never came back home to Lahore. They shot him*". An increase in Punjabi target killing is widespread in Balochistan. Practices as such impact education substantially, since it discourages appropriately qualified persons to engage in teaching activities at institutions in Balochistan.

In recent years, increased political instability in Balochistan has had a dramatic direct impact on the provision of education there (Bhatti, 2014). The lack of security and stability has created an environment where risk-adverse Private educational institutions in particular are reluctant enter. Consequently, because private establishments are scarce, statistics indicate that most students in Balochistan are enrolled in public institutions (Malik, 2011). Public institutions are also negatively impacted by the insecurity and instability. Hamza highlighted, "*if you study in a public school, they will not be open for half the year because of popular protests in Balochistan to become a separate nation*". Education of every type is disrupted by ethnic-influenced conflicts, depriving students from access to their fundamental right to education.

Different cultures and underlying ideologies and their impact on school curricula

Most Balochi and Punjabi participants characterised Balochis as ‘traditional’. Hamza, a Balochi, emphasised "*We are very conservative people. We do not forget our root*". Urban centres in Punjab, such as Lahore, are often characterised as more modern and fairly westernised. In comparison to Balochistan, Punjabis have combined their traditional ethnic identity and modern Western norms. This can be observed in an individual's daily life. Neelofur explained, "*I have Balochi friends in Lahore who wear skinny jeans but in Balochistan they have to wrap themselves up. This is not because their family is conservative. Society is. Western clothes will be frowned upon*". When contrasting Lahore and Quetta (capital city of Balochistan), it is clear that there has been more of an influence of Western culture. An example of this ‘liberalisation’ in education is evident in the decision of parents in Punjab sending their children to pursue private British education.

In this context, since Balochis are seen as conservative, secular ideologies advocating for democracy, which are promoted through Westernised education are not necessarily embraced to as great of an extent in Balochistan. Balochi participants noted in the interviews that teaching and learning from an American or British curriculum is perceived negatively by some Balochi tribes as an erosion of culture and *Punjabisation*. *Punjabisation* is a term that describes the dominance of Punjabis on power structures and consequently, their attempt to enforce personal ideologies on other provinces of Pakistan (Ahmed, 1989). In the same vein, Punjabi participants advocated for a British curriculum to be a standard of education in Pakistan as

indicated by Aliyah, *"I like to challenge things and theories. We have been influenced by the Western culture so much. We are very westernised and so should our education be"*. Many Balochis who have the financial resources often migrate to Punjab in a quest for a better education and livelihoods. This experience for some Balochis can further enhance the perception of an ethnic bias that the federal government has more of an explicit interest in Punjab (Khan, 2006) when compared to other provinces.

While the curriculum of the schools in each province does not instil ethnic based discrepancies explicitly, a certain pattern of behaviour can be observed to emerge from graduates of varied education systems. Balochi and Punjabi participants alike maintained a liberal outlook on life because of their tertiary educational background in Lahore. However, Fizza stated, *"in school in Balochistan, it was not about raising questions. The principal was a tyrant. My learning was all about accepting what teachers said. That is word and cannot be challenged unless you want to get in trouble"*. Education plays an imperative role in moulding their frame of mind and attitude (Nisar, 2010), which initiates resentment against Punjabi's and therefore, identity politics.

Employment Opportunities

To qualify as a candidate for a job in Pakistan's civil services, one is required to complete a CSS (Civil Superior Services Pakistan) examination. On the surface, the CSS examination is an open competition whereby applicants from all provinces are welcome to apply. Thus, the exam and the opportunity to acquire a reputable job in Pakistan's government services are 'equal' (CSS, 2014). However, in practice, this is not the case. As a consequence of "superior" quality of education nurtured in Punjabis from childhood, Balochi contenders are unable to compete. Sarah, a professor working in Lahore for several years stated,

As soon as you are born in a province, there is an automatic bias. Even till high school you are given a specific type of education. A kid who has studied in Lahore will obviously be more competitive than a kid from Quetta. It is more about the opportunities you are given as a citizen of Pakistan. It is a base line problem. The

education is not even standardised, you see.
Children from different provinces do not start on
equal footing.

There are few quality private institutions in Balochistan. In comparison, Punjab has a range of private institutions including low-cost private education establishments (Malik, 2011). The provision of sophisticated education facilities, which are easily accessible erode mantras of equality and works out in an expected favour of a Punjabi candidate. Moreover, the same is true for employment opportunities offered by private firms in Punjab, which place a strong emphasis on "merit" in hiring decisions. A few of the Balochi participants worked for multinationals in Punjab, opportunities they were able to attain as they all completed their university education at universities situated in Lahore. Thus, they were able to compete in the Punjabi dominated job market. However, even those Balochi participants that attained university education at top national universities have trouble finding opportunities once they return to Balochistan. Some of the Balochi participants were unemployed at the time of the interviews and in a desperate quest for a job in Balochistan. Hamza noted,

I am a chemical engineer. There is close to zero
chemical industries in Quetta. I am in Quetta and
am stuck. I want to contribute to the city. I simply
cannot because I will not find a job here.

Balochis are unable to capture key positions in the federal government, multinational corporations or raise a voice for their rights despite being a resources rich province. A lack of education is used as a tool for marginalisation, which Marium demonstrated effectively, *"If people get educated, they will know what is going on. What will be Punjab's role then? This is a game"*. Balochis, due to the lack of access to quality education and employment opportunities have a challenging road to upward mobility.

In comparison, all Punjabi participants were employed in a mix of private and public institutions. Furthermore, it is argued that the government may explicitly discriminate based on ethnicity wherein applicants need to verify their provincial identity (Adeney, 2012). It can be claimed that Balochis are discriminated in Punjab, or any other province for that matter, when they seek jobs. As Ibrahim indicated:

The local companies do ask your ethnicity and
have a mandatory field on forms. I had to fill one

though I never clearly understood the reason for such discrimination. We are all Pakistani.

This reinforces the notion that provincial identity trumps Pakistani nationalism underlining ethnic differences. Lastly, a surprising finding revealed that the elite professional class in Balochistan is comprised of Punjabis. Through their excellent education background, most top jobs in Balochi corporations are captured by Punjabis. They monopolise power structures across the country (Habib, 2013).

Conclusion and implications

In conclusion, ethnic groups in Pakistan are divided along territorial and linguistic characteristics. Therefore, provincial identity surpasses notions of Pakistani nationalism. In effect, ethnic heterogeneity translates into unequal distribution of economic, social and political progression experienced amongst the different provinces. The severity of circumstances perpetuates when one ethnic group (i.e. Punjab) dominates the power structure marginalising others through *de facto* discriminatory practices. This gives way to ethnic identity based politics (Majeed, 2013).

Research reveals that the Balochi grievance against the Punjabi-dominated power structure emerges from an unequal allocation of financial resources (Khan, 2013). Consequently, Balochistan lacks adequate funds to invest in education development. In addition, political instability caused by unprecedented ethnic strife contributes towards poor quality education, which, as a result, impacts a Balochi's future course of life. In comparison, Punjabis are at an advantage in the national realm of being because of their robust education foundation (Majeed, 2013). Their dominance at the federal level is a key rationale for their progress in Pakistan and resentment among the Balochis towards Punjabis. Essentially, access to quality education impacts opportunities to progress in Pakistan's national realm. Lastly, the impact identity politics has on education can be deemed as a self-reinforcing vicious cycle.

The vicious cycle of identity politics and subsequently, the adverse impacts imposed upon Balochistan's education system must be dealt with effectively. Mitigating the impact of identity

politics will be a challenge due to the established provincial identity dictates politics in Pakistan. However, a critical analysis reveals that ethnic based identity politics can be made less exclusionary and divisive, through the implementation of a number of reforms.

An amendment of the 18th Constitutional Amendment could be instrumental in eliminating existing discrepancies. Limited clarity on the delegation of administrative or financial authorities present in the Constitutional text must be addressed (Bukhari and Kamran, 2013). For instance, Article 25-A that seeks to provide free universal education for children between the ages of 5-16 is yet to be enforced in Balochistan. It is important to note that the Constitutional Right to free education was approved by the National Assembly whereas its enforcement that entails massive financial liabilities has been devolved to the respective provinces. To reduce education inequality and ensure enforcement of Article 25-A, the Federal government must facilitate free education across the country in a uniform manner through providing special funds to provinces on the basis of literacy rates, for example. In addition, the federal government should institute mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement of Article 25-A (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2011).

Furthermore, a standardised education system should be promoted in Pakistan. One medium of instruction and uniform curriculum is necessary to eradicate the problems caused by the multiplicity of education systems. English can be deemed appropriate to promote meaningful learning because of its increased demand in the national and international arena (Habib, 2013). Whilst Urdu should be acknowledged as a key subject in the curricula, provincial languages must comprise an optional course alongside. Furthermore, it is essential to steadily revise the Pakistani curriculum in public schools through introducing Western education characteristics in the National syllabus. Material which stimulates students to think critically should be encouraged, as opposed to a mere memorisation of text-book facts, for example.

Contrary to the Balochi perception, the financial distribution of resources based on the percentage of Pakistan's population a province comprises is a fair criterion. Nevertheless, the federal government could release special grants to Balochistan for the development of physical (i.e. infrastructure), and human (i.e. improving skills via training of local teachers) capacities to enhance access to and therefore, provision of quality education. A short-term increase in

financial resources from the federal government to overcome inequality in Balochistan can be time-framed and goal oriented, whereby progress can be assessed using pre-set indicators.

Much effort is required to fulfil Muhammad Ali Jinnah's (founder of Pakistan) dream of safeguarding all minorities and treating them with equality; the fundamental on which Pakistan was created in 1947. Modern day Pakistan portrays otherwise. In a federation that comprises four distinct provinces governed by varied ideologies, unison is still a utopia. Education can be appreciated as a powerful mechanism to foster development and consequently, change.

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